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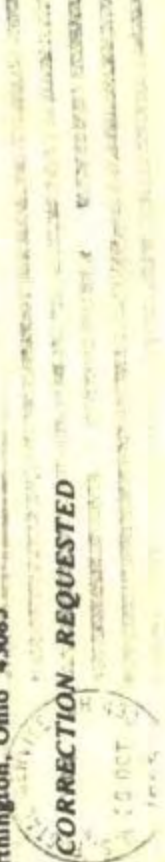
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# 1937~1938 Buick Club

842 Mission Hills Lane,  
Worthington, Ohio 43085

ADDRESS

CORRECTION REQUESTED



First Class Mail

THE  
**TORQUE·TUBE**



Volume IV • Number 2

*[Three lines of handwritten text, heavily obscured by blue ink.]*

● **FOUNDED BY DAVE LEWIS** ●



# THE TORQUE·TUBE

THE NEWS PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS

OF THE 1937-1938 BUICK CLUB • FOUNDED 1980



**VOL. IV ● October 1985 ● NO. 2**

This issue starts right off with a

## ***HARANGUE & DIATRIBE***

Remember, your Editor is supposed to be an editor. That is to say, I am supposed to take stuff people contribute, clean it up, arrange it and print it. As it is, I have to create too much, and someday I am going to create 32 pages totally blank except for a tiny message on page 1 that there ain't a bleepin' thing to say. Every now and then I discover more-or-less by accident that somebody has neat stuff he is waiting for me to tell him I want. Now, HOW IN HELL CAN I TELL YOU I WANT IT IF I DO NOT KNOW YOU HAVE IT??

For starters, here is a very brief and general list of things needed.

1. Technical articles and tips.
2. Adventures, serious or funny.
3. Photos, especially original interiors, dashboards, etc. clear and in detail. (Black & white photos are best; more important, glossy, color or B&W.)
4. Questions. Does everyone know everything? I know I don't. Seek and ye shall find.

I am going to start picking out names and dunning again if nothing comes in soon. I have not had to do this for a year, and I have better ways to spend my time.

(CONTINUED)

● **William E. Olson, Editor** ●

● **842 Mission Hills Lane, Worthington, Ohio 43085** ●



WARNINGS. (1) Those who are dunned and fail to respond will have their names printed in BIG LETTERS in a LIST OF LAZY PERSONS. (2) Remember the threat to print boyhood reminiscences and meat loaf recipes? Well, I have already written a long boyhood reminiscence about TRAINS and so help me I will print that AT THE DROP OF A HAT!! Also, MONTEZUMA'S MEAT LOAF!!

So come now, are you all grossly ignorant? Are there no more than three members including me who can work a camera? All illiterate? DO YOU GIVE A RUDDY DAMN??

I do not wish to write diatribes and polemics. PLEASE CONTRIBUTE! Those who have feel great satisfaction. SHARE THEIR JOY!

To those who have contributed, THANKS!

— Bill

## GOT YOUR ATTENTION.? OK, NOW COMES THE **GOOD STUFF.**

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### HOW ABOUT THIS ?



1938 41 - Bob Castelli (530) - Livonia, MI

# BLACK BEAUTY



## Cover Car ~ Marvin Rhynard's 1938 61

### HISTORY OF MY 1938 BUICK

by

M. L. Rhynard

My car was purchased in July 1982 in Allentown, Pennsylvania. The Buick Club national meeting was being held in nearby Bethlehem. This car was not at the show, but I learned of its whereabouts and the fact it could be purchased. In fact I was talking to an owner of a '47 convertible which was for sale. When I mentioned I preferred a 1938 with side mounts he told me of this car. We didn't discuss the purchase of the '47 any further.

I met with the owner and agreed to a price. This car was completely restored in 1968 and the individual from whom I purchased the car had owned it for 7 years. He stated to me that he had probably not driven this car 1,000 miles in the 7 years he had owned it.

I had the car shipped home by commercial car carrier and in the fall of 1982 I began restoration. The upholstery is in good condition except I had a trim shop repad the front seat. The interior metal trim, including the dash had been "woodgrained" incorrectly so this was sent to a restorer in Battle Creek, Michigan. All sheet metal was removed and sent to a professional stripper near Charlotte, Michigan. After stripping I had the four fenders metal finished by a professional in Battle Creek. I stripped the body, including the doors, to bare metal. I removed the head on the engine and had the valves ground. A new wiring harness and all new engine gaskets were installed. A new battery was installed and engine detailed as necessary.



The body and sheet metal was primed and sanded several times then a sealer applied. Five coats of nitrocellulose lacquer was applied. After at least a month the body and each separate piece was wet sanded with 400 grit sandpaper. Three more coats of nitrocellulose lacquer were applied and again a wait of approximately 30 days, at which time each piece was wet sanded with an ultra fine sandpaper and polished. About 6 1/2 gallons of nitrocellulose lacquer was used. During the 1 1/2 years I worked on this car I had had a number of parts rechromed including the radio grille, hood ornament, side mount name plates, headlight reflectors, and horn parts. A correct steering wheel was purchased and sent to Richard Gumm in Ohio for restoration. A horn ring and button were purchased and rechromed. New plastic escutcheons, gear shift knob and other items were obtained. The wheels were sandblasted and refinished with red polyurethane plastic. Reproduction rubber pieces were purchased from Lynn Steele. This included trunk trim, vent window rubber, parking and tail-light rubber, windshield, transmission and bumper bracket rubber.

The car was reassembled in the spring of 1984 and completed on May 25, 1984 at 8:45 p.m. There was a car show in Mason, Michigan the next day so I wanted to be ready for that. Except for some minor touch up and adjustments, the restoration is complete. I have tried to keep the car as authentic as possible. The only variance to this is the installation of an electric fuel pump to be used in case of vapor lock, and an inverter which allows me to carry a 12 volt CB if I so desire. I carry a fire extinguisher in the car at all times.

While I take credit for the restoration, I really had lots of help. I'm fortunate in having a neighbor, Bob Andrews, who is a retired mechanic and worked on these cars the first time around. My son-in-law Dave Hundt taught me to paint and helped in many ways, including reassembly. Finally, Bud Hicks, BCA #3307 and Bob Jones, BCA #2397 who gave a lot of sensible answers to dumb questions.

I'm not sure a restoration is ever complete. I'm still looking for the center front bumper emblem and grill guard and I still hit the swap meets looking for parts and accessories. Maybe old habits die hard!

\* \* \* \* \*

After I saw Marvin's Century at the BCA show in Toledo, and came home with a few nice photos, I asked him to give us a brief story about the car. In particular, I was interested in the nitrocellulose paint job. I know that many people prefer modern acrylic lacquers; these certainly have some advantages over the older-style finish and can produce beautiful results. However, the paint on this car really makes it look like I remember new cars looking decades ago. Perhaps it was my imagination or the lighting, but there seemed to be a subtle but nevertheless very real difference. In any event, it is a beautiful job, and has incredible smoothness and depth. Believe me, friends, looking at that paint is like looking into the eyes of a beautiful woman. It does something to you.

—Bill



# BCA National

# SHOW SHOTS



Bob Pipkin's fine 1938 model 67. Note the extremely rare export model desert water bag...or wine skin?

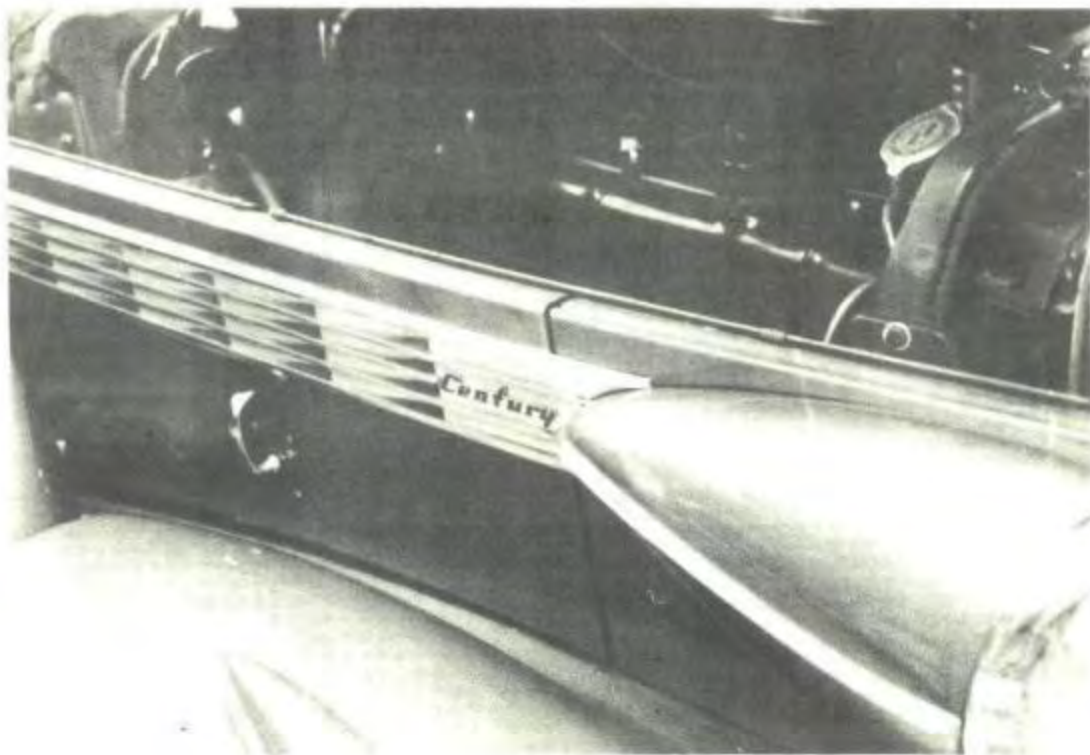
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Beautiful metallic blue 1937 Limited owned by Dick & Barbara Jones, which we featured several months ago.  
(photo by Mike Vosganian)





# "I prefer the **CENTURY**"



Story by Bob Pipkin • Salem, Oregon

I bought my 1938 Model 67 the first time in July of 1973 from a high school student in Los Gatos, California. The body was nice, but all the upholstery, plastic and rubber parts were shot. It had a 1948 engine, which was all apart and not running.

Flat back Centuries in 1938 were rare, so I bought this one for a future project. Because of other interest in Buick convertibles, I sold the 1938 Model 67 twice and bought it again and again. The last time I bought it back, in 1979, I decided to keep it and build it for a nice "driver".

I started restoration in the winter 1982-83 by completely dismantling the body and chassis. After rebuilding or replacing worn components, I started the reassembly process in the winter of 1983-84.

The suspension is "upgraded" by using 2½" brakes and large spindles from a 1952 Roadmaster. The rear brakes are from a 1940 Century. The rear end assembly is the original 1938 Century with 3.90 to 1 gears. All bearings and seals were replaced.



The engine is a 1938, upgraded internally to 1949 specifications. All moving parts were electronically balanced to give a smooth engine. All engine accessories were rebuilt or replaced with new parts.

The old frayed wiring was stripped out and a new wiring assembly installed. All the rubber parts were replaced with Lynn Steele reproduction pieces. New window channels and glass were installed.

The interior is refinished in blue leather and blue wool, which was available as an option on all 1938 Buicks. The trunk was completely re-done in material that closely matches the original material. I had enough pieces of the original rear seat carpet and trunk material to get a close match.

The wood graining is red mahogany. All series 60, 80, and 90 Buicks used mahogany wood grain with the exception of the convertibles and some Centuries. Some 1938 Centuries were produced with a "chevron" type pattern on the dash only. The window and windshield garnish mouldings were mahogany.

The steering wheel is ivory colored, as I couldn't find the original mahogany color that was standard on all series 60, 80, and 90 Buicks in 1938.

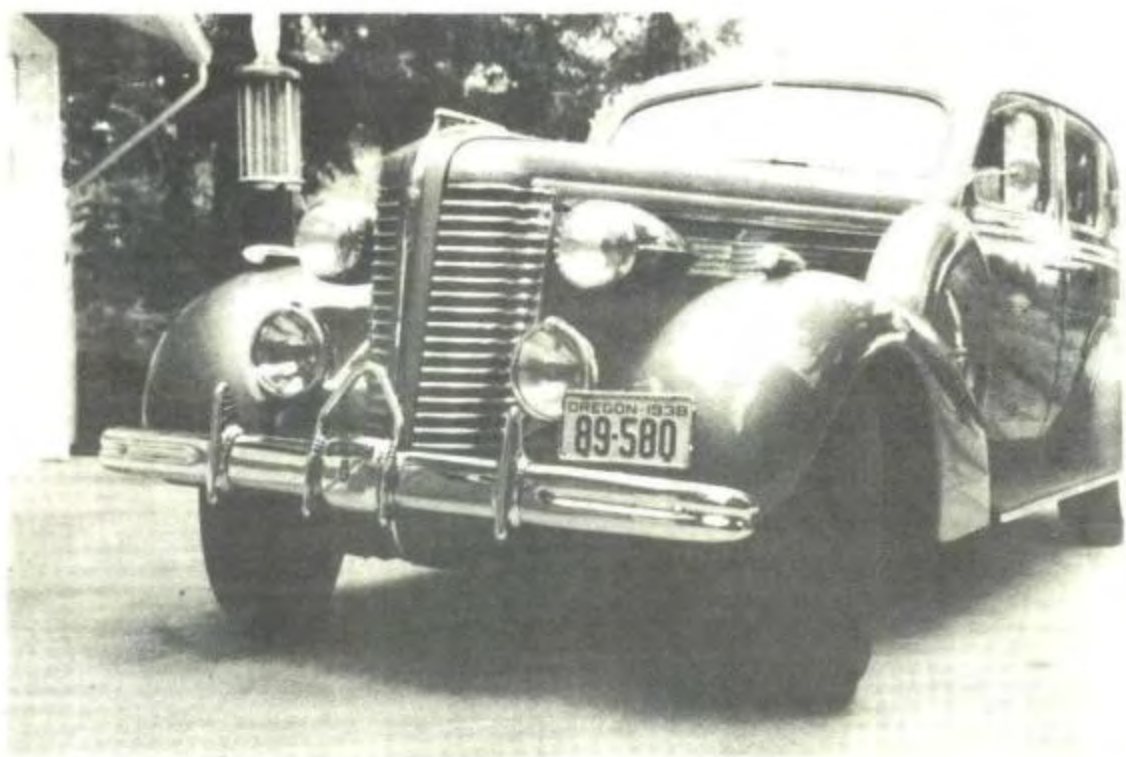
I didn't like the original dark green paint, so I had the car painted homer gray, which is metallic. The gray goes quite well with the blue leather and blue wool interior.

I finished the car one day before our tour to the Buick National Meet in Los Angeles. Doug Nelson, Marshall Nelson and I drove the 2,300 mile round trip with hardly a problem. The weather was severe, with temperatures up to 112° several days. Marshall Nelson drove his 1937 80C on our tour to the Nationals and won a first in his class; but that's another story.

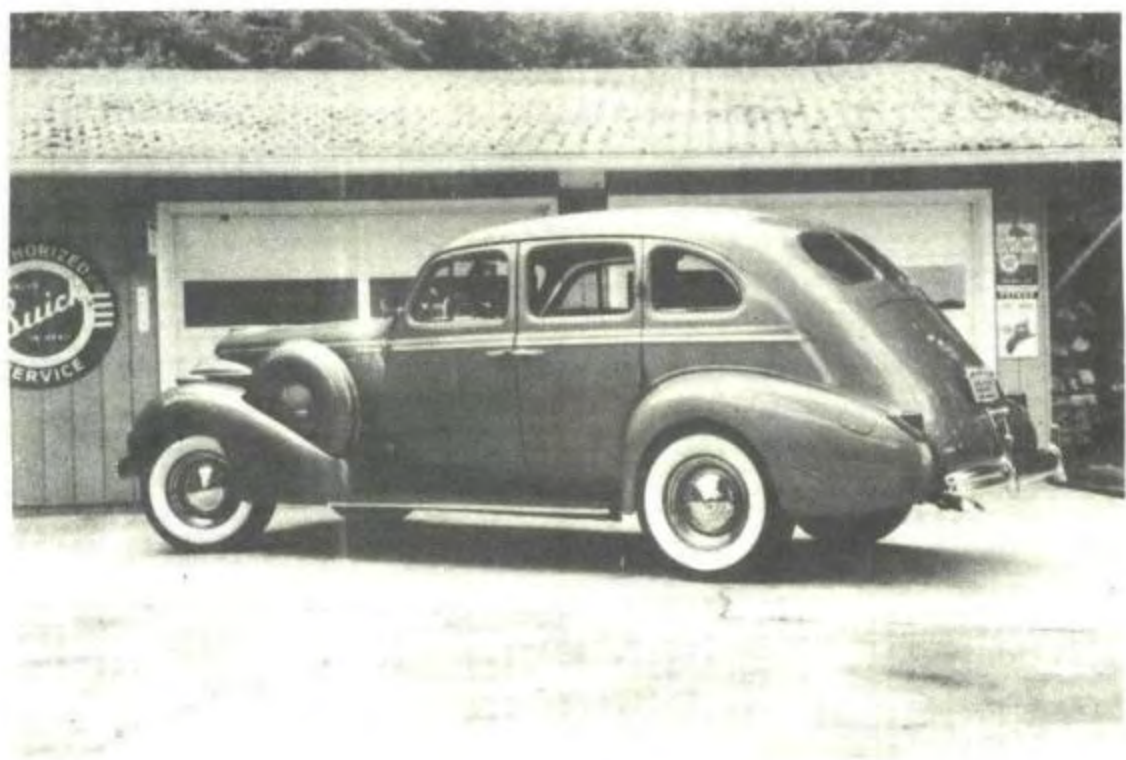
Among the twenty-five Buicks I have owned over the past twenty years, seven of them have been 1937-38 Centuries. I have owned at least one of each series of Buicks, (40, 50, 60, 70, 80 and 90), and I still prefer the long-nosed Centuries.

\* \* \* \* \*

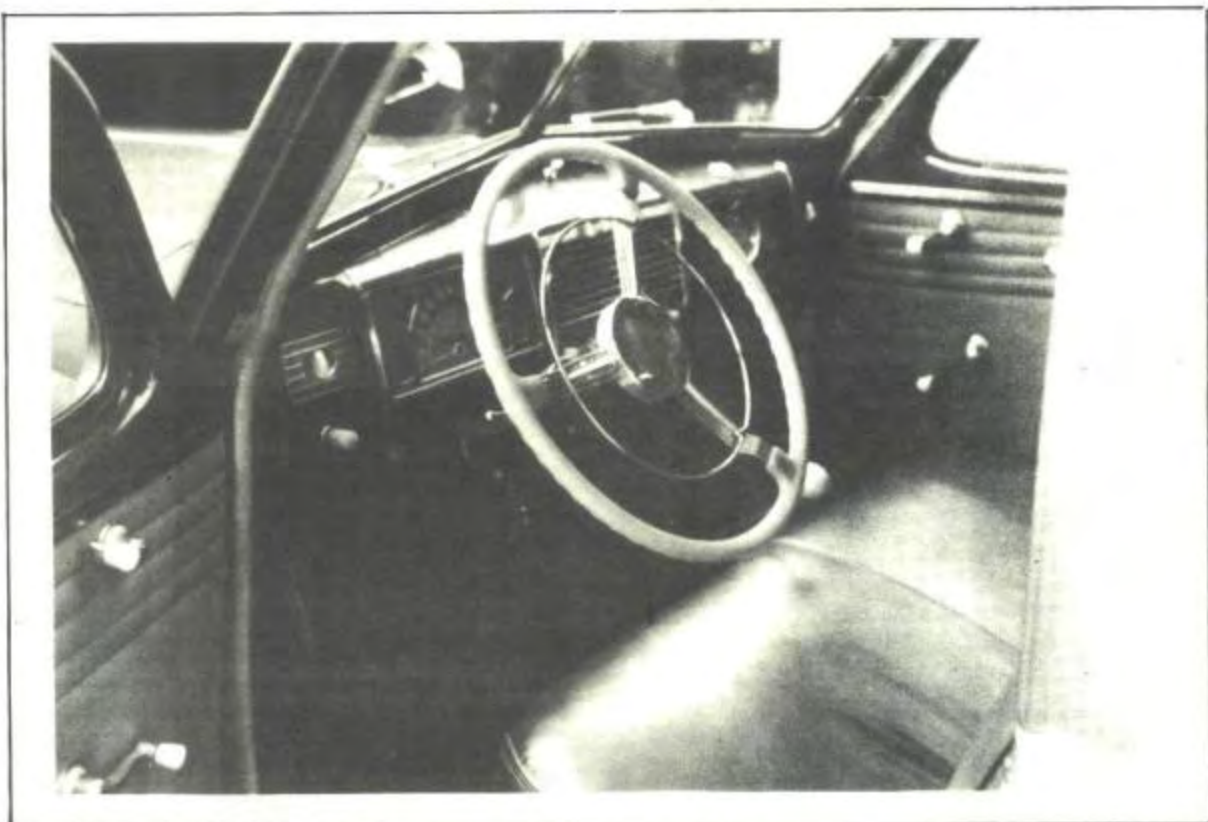
*Our thanks to Bob Pipkin for the fine story and photos. Bob has been an active and involved member of this Club since its early days, and has given Dave and me much helpful advice. He makes it sound all very matter-of-fact and straightforward, doesn't he? Well, believe me, folks, a lot of skill and knowledge went into that car, and I regret that you can't see it here in color. The "plain-back" or "sport" model Centuries were not popular (the two-door model 64 was discontinued after 1937, and only 1516 1938 model 67s were built), but I think they are great-looking cars. The combination of long hood and "short" tail is striking and very much late-1930s. At present, Bob also has a 1948 Super Estate Wagon, which, I must admit, is a pretty nice car too.*



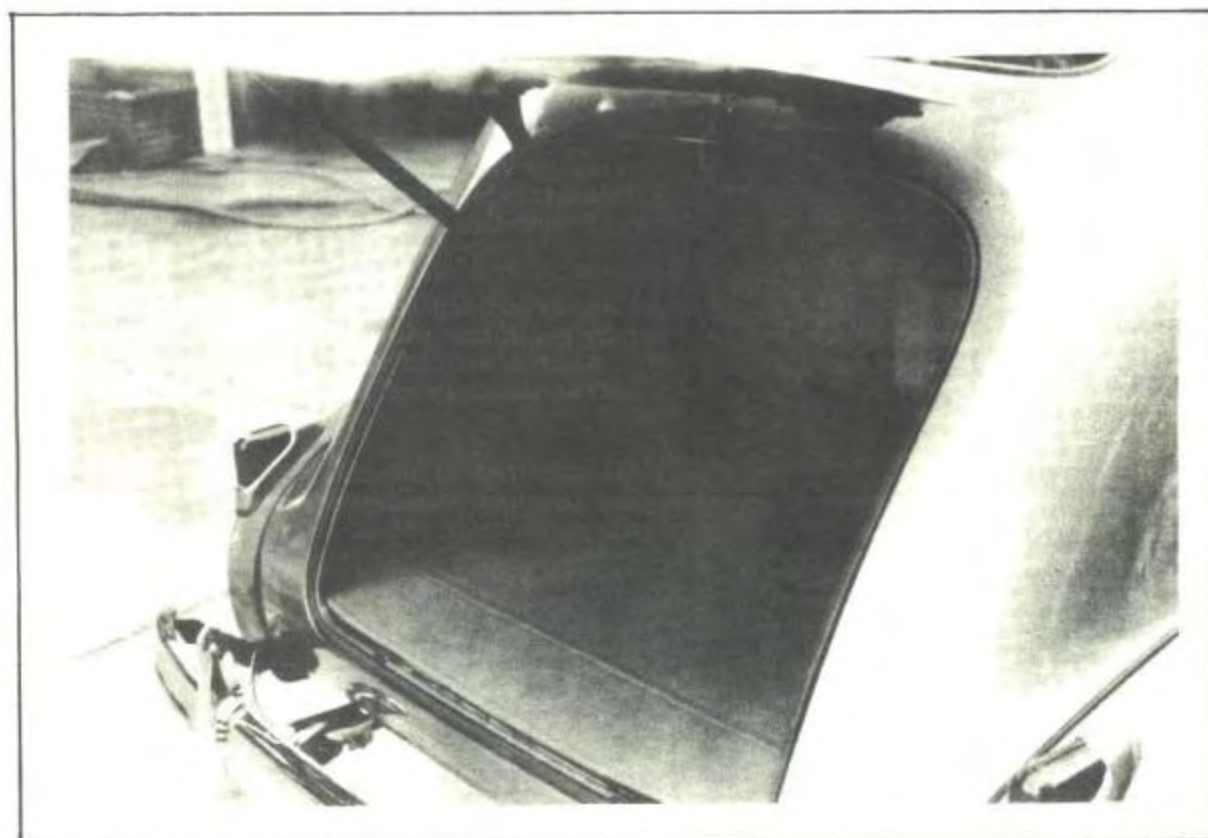
1938 CENTURY







BOB PIPKIN



# BUICK VS. *Packard*

Churning through my archives recently, I came across an article on the 1937 Packard 120. As you probably know, the 120 (apparently named for either its horsepower or its wheelbase) was half of Packard's effort to penetrate the medium and upper-medium price range, the other half being the Packard Six. The 120 was quite successful, and some authorities attribute the LaSalle's death in 1940 largely to this success. While the 120 is most often compared with the LaSalle and the Lincoln Zephyr, since both those cars represented the same kind of effort, it occurred to me that it could as well be compared with the Buick. This article tries to make such a comparison, at least in a limited way.

In many of its specifications, the Packard 120 fell halfway between the 40 and 60 series Buicks. Because it was closer in price to the Century, I have chosen that comparison. Although the Century was a larger, faster and more powerful car, there are a number of very close similarities. The following table shows several specifications for the '37 Century convertible and Packard 120 convertible.

	<u>BUICK 66C</u>	<u>PACKARD 120</u>
Base Price, FOB factory	\$1095	\$1060
Engine	OHV 8	L-8
Bore & stroke	3.44 x 4.3	3.25 x 4.25
Displacement	320	282
Max. hp	130 @ 3400	120 @ 3800
Max. torque	258 @ 2000	225 @ 2000
Comp. ratio	5.75:1	6.4:1
Clutch	11 in.	10 in.
Transmission	3-spd.	3-spd., opt. overdrive
Ratios 1st	2.39:1	2.45:1
2nd	1.53:1	1.53:1
3rd	1.00:1	1.00:1
Rev.	2.39:1	3.16:1
Differential	3.9:1	4.09:1
Steering		
Turns	4.5	4.3
Ratio	19	20.5
Turn circle	42 ft.	42 ft.
Brakes		
Drum diam.	12.0 in.	12.0 in.
Lining area	181.4 in.	171.5 sq. in.
Tires	7.00 x 15	7.00 x 16



BUICK 66CPACKARD 120

Wheelbase	126	120
Length	203	187.5
Height	69	70.5
Width	72	72
Curb weight	3715	3485
Performance (est.)		
Accel. 0-60	16.5 sec.	19.5 sec.
Top speed	96 mph	85 mph

In addition to the foregoing, both cars used very similar suspension systems, hydraulic brakes, automatic chokes and two-barrel carburetors. (The Zephyr of course, in addition to the V-12, employed Henry's old favorites: transverse leaf springs and mechanical brakes.)

Packard was not out for a "sporty" image with the 120 (or anything else) and thus the car's performance statistics are much closer to those of the 40-series Buick. In terms of refinement, smoothness and solid construction, however, the 120 was a real competitor. Styling was another matter. Packard made its big move between 1934 and 1935, and its styling changed very little from 1935 through 1937 and not much more into 1938 and 1939: the company valued the traditional, identifiable Packard shape and look. By contrast, Buick swept from an undistinguished, very traditional look in '34 and '35 through a series of near-spectacular annual changes that are now considered among the very best of the late 1930's. If you put a '37 Packard and a '37 Buick next to each other, most casual observers would not guess they were the same year.



The shadowy figure is Don Gust (#043) standing next to his fine '38 66S inside the garage at the BCA Regional in Toledo. Sorry, Don, the lighting was a little tough, and I exposed for the car. You'll have to take my word for it, folks, Don's a pretty good-looking fellow in addition to a master Buick restorer.

# Odds + Ends

**ROSTER.** As reported in the last issue, Mike Vosganian (#447) is working up our Club roster. I decided to postpone printing it until Issue 3 (which will go out around December 1) to allow for late renewals, and because I hope an ad I ran in the October Hemmings and a listing in the Cars & Parts Annual, plus some more mailings to people picked out of the BCA Bugle "New Members" may bring us new members who could be included. I expect (but do not promise) that the roster will be in the next issue, unless it takes too many pages, in which case it will be in the next two issues.

**INDEX.** In this issue, courtesy of Glenn Seymour (#345) of Potsdam, NY, is the Annual Index, for Volume III. Our thanks again to Glenn (and to Mrs. Seymour) for this valuable help.

**BACK ISSUES AND COPIES.** I am all out of printed copies of "back issues" except for Volume IV, No. 1 which all of you have anyway. At one time, I made photocopies of back issues for people who wanted them and reimbursed the cost. However, after a while I found that this took an hour or more almost every Saturday morning, and I got aggravated. I could have had my secretary do it at the office, but besides being "white-collar crime" of a sort, it could well have aggravated her. Believe me, friends, she is just as essential as I to getting this sheet done, and it is not good to have either of us aggravated. So the back-issue copying has been discontinued. However, if anyone would like a copy of an article or two or three, I will provide that upon receipt of 7¢ per page plus postage. Since many of you were not members two or three years ago, I will from time to time repeat articles that appeared in Volumes I and II and which I think are particularly useful or interesting or which cover subjects reflected in questions. To those long-time members who will have seen such stuff before, my apologies.

**1938 MODEL 87 - ANY LEFT?** A very unusual car, appearing only in 1938, was the Roadmaster Streamline Sport Sedan (model 87), a "slant-back" four-door. While it did not have the lowest production of all 1937-38 Buicks, I have never seen one or heard of any person or museum who has one. Does anyone know whether any remain? It would be terrific to find one. The lowest production model in 1937 was the 91-F (158) and in 1938 the 60-C (219). (The 91-F and the 64 were discontinued at the end of the 1937 model year.) There were 466 model 87's made. It was the only model in 1937-1938 of which none were made for export.

**DASHBOARD-1938.** I am sorry the picture of the 1938 dash from the sales brochure did not come out better in the last issue. The printer thought it could be done in the same manner as a photo, but the thing has blue ink in it. A photocopy of the page comes out better. (I used the original because photocopies come out awful if one tries to print them.) If anyone would like a photocopy of the original page, with a 1938 40-series interior view thrown in, please write with SASE.



FOUR-PASSENGER SPORT COUPE

(CONTINUED)





# NEW MEMBERS



James Howell (#537)  
4430 S. Rachel Lane.  
New Berlin, WI 53151  
414/786-1820  
'37 46S

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201/925-3428  
'38 41

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'37 61

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'38 90L

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'37 90L

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703/354-3841

Larry Morris (#543)  
4248 Leonard NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
616/453-6325  
'37 81

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NAMES: BEGIN WITH "B." I have a book which is great fun called Maine Lingo: it defines, in alphabetical order, numerous "down east" expressions. The alphabet used, however, begins with "B," the ground for this being that it was considered very bad luck by deep-water sailors to give a ship a name beginning with "A." Likewise, I have received reports from two members who, like Albert Pavlick (Issue 1, page 2) have given names to their cars. All such names begin with "B," probably because, as even Dave Lewis knows, "Buick" also begins with "B." In any event, here they are: Joe McKee (#433); Cheyenne, WY) - "Betsy"; Ray Lawson (#016; Troy, MI) - "Boss" (1940), "Beauty" (1936), "Betsy" (1938), "Beulah" (1955). Ray's unusual custom-bodied 1938 90-L reputed to have been built for New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia has defied naming.





# TECHNICAL TIPS



GLOVEBOX MEDALLION; STEERING WHEELS. Dave Lewis says he has never seen a 1937 or 1938 Buick without a clock in the glovebox door. Well, he has never seen my car. On 40-series cars the dash clock (Buick called it a "watch") was an optional accessory. Cars delivered without the clock had a medallion in the middle of the glovebox door. Above is a not-too-great photo of one of these (I forgot about parallax correction: it is actually rectangular.) The colors match those used on the instrument cluster: gray background; ivory stripes and letters; and the "Buick 8" shaded in red. Not bad-looking, and the clocks never work right anyway. On the back it says: "Made by A.C. Spark Plug Co. - Flint, Mich., U.S.A. - Patent Applied For." (It is far from obvious to me what there is about this gadget that might be patentable, but there are millions of patents, I suppose, so maybe it doesn't take much.) Incidentally, it appears that my car was originally a "plain-Jane" with nothing in it except possibly a heater. (It had at least two heaters before I got it, judging by the four holes bored through the firewall.) Included in the plain-Jane package was the "regular" brown hard rubber steering wheel. This, believe it or not, was standard on all '37 Buicks, but I know of only one other one in the world. I am going to take this off and put on a repro "flexible" wheel, and when I get around to that there will be a little story about it. In anticipation of this:

(1) If anyone besides Jim O'Connor in Pittsburgh has a "regular" three-spoke hard rubber wheel, please tell me.

(2) If anyone knows more than one-half of a rumor about original 1937 and 1938 steering wheels, please tell me what you know.





## TECHNICAL TIPS



**RUNNING BOARDS and RUBBER PARTS.** Last month we reported on a project by John Hopley (who is #033, not #044) of Bow, Washington. I received another letter from John about this, and in addition to running the substance as an ad, I thought it would be interesting to quote an edited version in this section. John says:

"On the running board rubber mentioned last time, I finally found time to restore the boards from a '37 41 parts car I have. Would like to advertise them for \$250 a pair plus shipping and an old pair of boards that need restoring. Will also include a set of '37 40-series mounting pads: bumper arm grommets front and rear; park lights; tail lights; trunk light. [Editor's Note: trunk license light pad for model 41 will fit only trunk-back cars.] If anyone wants just the mounting pads, \$25 a set plus shipping. I believe my running boards are good enough to be show quality. A lot of time went into making the molds (fiberglass) and the rubber is exactly as original.

"I believe the same boards will fit other '37 40-series cars, and '38 40-series as well. [Editor's Note: that is correct; however, the stainless moldings are different from '37 to '38.] I also have a couple pairs of board rubber for anyone interested in bonding his own at \$100 a pair plus shipping.

"Believe me, it's one hell of a job to do a set of boards. First it takes heat to peel the old rubber off, then soundblasting, then prime and paint the underside. Next I coat the top side with epoxy, and finally bond the new rubber (Devcon urethane) to the epoxy-coated boards. We found, through 20 years experience building boats for the U.S. Navy, that epoxy affords a superior bond to urethanes.

"The fiberglass sidemount covers I will definitely have done this winter."

A real debt of gratitude is owed John by all of us for undertaking these projects. We will have more about them as they progress. Here are John's address and phone numbers:

John Hopley  
512 Roney Road  
Bow, WA 98232  
206/766-6225 - home  
206/676-6200 - ofc.

**STEERING WHEEL PLASTIC: CAN YOU HELP?** John Hopley also intends to construct a mold to make a new steering wheel rim. He would like to know where to get the correct "pourable" plastic material. I think polyvinyl chloride has been used for this, but I am not sure and have no idea where to get the stuff. Can anyone give us a lead? Please help.





## TECHNICAL TIPS



**SIGNDESIGN!** Scott Peck (#318) runs a company called "Signdesign." He says: "I do signs for car shows; pin striping; and woodgraining." Members in the West (or anywhere else) might want to contact Scott if that kind of service or advice is needed.

Scott Peck (#318)  
1178 Emery Street  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84104  
801/972-5718  
801/972-3354

**CRANKSHAFTS & FLYWHEELS.** I received the following from Richard Hollar (#510) of Baltimore, MD, who is, incidentally, director of the BOOM Chapter of BCA (Buick Owners of Maryland -- clever, what?). I asked Dave Lewis and Bob Pipkin to comment on Richard's advice, and that comment also follows. Here is Richard's letter, which states the problem and one way to solve it.

"I have rebuilt several engines including the straight-8 Buick. I was always in the habit of building the engine on a stand, removing the engine when complete, and then installing the flywheel and bell housing. This method cannot be used when assembling a straight-8 Buick engine as the top two bolts for the bell housing are attached from the inside and are inaccessible if the flywheel is bolted to the crankshaft. In addition, if the bell housing is bolted to the rear of the block, there is not enough clearance to attach the flywheel. If the following method is used, it will save much frustration.

1. Bolt the bell housing to the back of the block and attach this assembly to your engine stand. Some additional support may be necessary as the straight-8 block is long.

2. Bolt the flywheel to the back of the crankshaft. The timing mark should be visible through the window on the upper right-hand corner of the bell housing when No. 1 cylinder is at TDC. (It is a good idea to make this mark more visible with a bright color point.)

3. Install the crankshaft and flywheel assembly in your engine block and fit up the main bearings. After this is done you can continue assembly of the engine as usual."

As noted above, I asked Dave and Bob to comment on this. (I cannot resist interjecting at this point that Richard also said: "THE TORQUE TUBE is nothing less than terrific." Thanks, pal!) Here's an edited version of Dave's thoughts. I hope I got it right; as you know, all the misspelled words and goofy grammar sometimes make for rough going.

(CONTINUED)





## TECHNICAL TIPS



"Bill: His problem seems to have been that he installed the bolts in the crank and then, after installing in the block, he found the crank would not fit down into the bellhousing because it hits the studs on the end of the crank. One should install the flywheel on the end of the crank with none of the bolts installed on the end of the crank. With the rear main cap off, you install two studs, then turn them down and install the others. After all are installed you can put the rear main cap on and you are done. The small series engines used a stud that went in from the backside of the crank and through the flywheel; a nut on the stud holds the flywheel on. The problem is you can't get the studs out far enough for the flywheel to drop out because they run into the rear main cap. Since the lower half of the main is permanent, you must remove the top half and rotate the engine around. Remove half of them at a time and you will have the clearance to drop the flywheel.

"While Richard's method of installing the flywheel would work, it seems to me it is more difficult to do it that way, and you risk scarring one of your main bearings. On the 40-series, the crank is held on with dowel-like pins which must be installed with the rear main cap off. You install each one and then turn the crank to allow installation of the others. After all are installed you install the rear main cap. To me, this is an easier and safer method.

"This does not apply to the large series. They do not require the rear main cap to be removed since they used regular bolts which thread into the crank.

"The flywheel will only bolt on the crank one way so you really do not need to worry about location of the timing mark. Also note the '37 and '38 small series flywheels are not interchangeable. The timing mark location was changed in '38. The bellhousings are also different because of the new-style transmission in 1938."

To avoid going on too long, I will not quote Bob Pipkin, but he is in basic agreement. It thus seems that there are two ways to skin this cat, and the one you choose is up to you. The most important thing, in my view, is to identify and understand the problem in advance, and that I think we have accomplished. Once that is done, you can plan your solution and carry out the plan without frustrations and unpleasant surprises. How many times have we all been brought up short in the middle of something we thought or assumed we knew how to do? Even with planning, it will be only those among us with the most delicate and refined of manner who will not utter a few unprintables now and then. But without planning and thought we risk much trouble. Now, if I could only follow my own advice.... Thanks to Richard, Dave and Bob for cranking up all this help.



EIGHT-PASSENGER LIMOUSINE



## TECHNICAL TIPS



**WOODGRAIN PATTERNS.** I received from Paul Culp (#510) some photos (including close-ups) of both a 1937 40-series and a 1938 60-series dashboard. Sadly, I concluded that only one of these had any chance of coming through the printing process with anything close to sufficient clarity. The 1938 is of particular interest since we still have several open questions about how these looked. It is apparent from these photos that in the particular car photographed (a '38 model 61) the grain figure was a fairly simple horizontal stripe: not at all like the "burl" or "stumpwood" figure on the 40-series car in the '38 sales brochure shown last month. The color seems closer to mahogany than walnut, but -- from the photo anyway -- it could be either. The pattern goes across the entire dash. It also appears from one of these photos that the garnish moldings had a "swirl" or "mottle" figure. This agrees with the statements by Joe Giordano in the last issue that one '38 60-series pattern was a horizontal mahogany stripe figure. Especially because of the way light reflects from them, and because the photographer is working under conditions far from ideal, dashboards are difficult to photograph. I feel we are making progress, however, and eventually we will have something reasonably authoritative.



**Original 1938 Century Dash Close-up**





## Swapping your Rear End...

*(gears, that is)*

As we all know, the transmission and final drive ratios on the 1937 and 1938 Specials differ markedly from the gearing we have become accustomed to in modern cars. The standard 40-series cars have a final drive ratio of 4.4 to 1. The 60-series, by contrast, had the more powerful 320 cubic-inch engine in a relatively light body, and were engineered for speed and a "sporty" character. Thus the Centuries had 15-inch wheels and a 3.9 rear end.

Looking at the graphs set forth in the Factory Service Manuals, we see that for 1937 cars, at 60 mph a Special is turning 3200 rpm, while at the same speed the Century engine will be at 2800 rpm. A similar relationship exists for 1938. This is a function of the different rear end ratios and wheel sizes. Assuming 3800 rpm to be the effective upper limit, the Special tops out at 72 mph and the Century at about 85. While some cars (e.g., Packard) had an optional overdrive, and some (e.g., Auburn) a two-speed axle, and some, notably Ford, had after-market two-speed axles cooked up for them, Buicks have none of these. This has led to dissatisfaction on the part of some Special owners who wish to go fast.

In thinking about this subject, it should be remembered that cars in the 1930's were not engineered for today's "old car" hobbyist and today's roads, but for the mass of people who -- it was hoped -- would buy them, and the roads and driving conditions then existing. While today many of us think running up and down through the gears of a five-speed transmission is fun, in the 1930's the average driver doubtless viewed shifting gears as a burden to be minimized. The ability of a car to accelerate smoothly and powerfully from 10 or 15 mph in high gear was a selling point, and many of the powerful luxury cars of the era can be started in high with only a little bit of clutch slipping. (Indeed my '37 47 pulls away smoothly in high from 10 or 12 mph, and the engine is not in tip-top shape.) Likewise, of course, even the federal highways in most of the nation were a far cry from the highways of today. (Try, for example, U.S. 250, or the "old" versus the "new" parts of U.S. 50 in West Virginia.)

The Buick Special was not primarily intended to be a long-distance, high-speed touring car. Thus it was engineered (as its competitors were) for smooth and responsive performance at low speeds in high gear, and to start up a steep hill in low with no roaring or chattering.

There were, however, "police" or "high-speed" Specials made in both 1937 and 1938, presumably to be driven by manly types who didn't mind a little gear shifting. This was accomplished by putting the 60-series rear end into the 40-series car. I assume, although no mention is made of this in any options and accessories list I have seen, that anyone could order such a car. (It may



be noted that 1938 40-series "self-shifter" cars had a different rear end, the transmission having four speeds. Bob Pipkin has told me about a 3.62 rear end in "self-shifter" cars, and this is borne out by the 1928-38 Master Parts Book; however, the 1928-46 Book does not list those parts and says the cars had the 3.9 ratio. Jim Campbell, who ought to know, says both were used. It may also be noted that 80 and 90 series cars differ from both 40 and 60, among themselves, and markedly from '37 to '38.)

Some people feel the 40-series cars are ill-suited to modern driving conditions -- especially "tours" at turnpike speeds -- and have substituted 3.9 gear sets. Originally, I had some fairly strong reservation about this in my own mind, on the grounds that it was not "authentic" and changed the character of the car, although not its appearance. Having established quite clearly the existence of the "police" or "high-speed" option, however, I have withdrawn that objection. It does change the character of the car, without doubt. Some people who have done it are pleased and some are not so pleased, since low-speed acceleration in high gear will suffer.

Several members have inquired about this subject over the past few months. In view of this, I have decided to reprint two articles that appeared in Volume II, Issue 1 (March 1983) by then-member Hank Bates and by our dear old friend Bob Pipkin (#076). The Pipkin procedure is the more complex, but has the virtue of using parts that are probably easier to find. (Clearly, however, it is not "authentic" nor "original.") Please note that, as stated in the Bates article, it is not enough to simply change the ring and pinion. The "carrier assembly" or "case" must also be changed. These two articles follow.

#### LONGER LEGS FOR 1937 BUICK SPECIALS

Of all the mechanical work which I have done on my '37 Special Phaeton, perhaps the most satisfying was the installation of a '37 Century (3.9 to 1) pinion, ring gear and differential case, replacing the 4.4 to 1 gears which were standard.

The '37 and '38 Specials are "Naturals" for this changeover, since they have both a high winding rear axle ratio and an excessive low first gear, a whopping 2.94 to 1. The effect of this axle ratio in high gear is excessive noise and engine speed above 50 M.P.H., similar to that obtained in an overdrive equipped present day car in which the overdrive unit is unfortunately not working. The overall ratio in first gear (12.936 to 1) is even worse, approaching the "low-low" ratio found on some truck transmissions. It should be noted that in 1939, Buick made available the 3.9 rear axle ratio as a regular option (certain Specials with police equipment in '36 thru '37 were furnished with 3.9 gears), and greatly reduced the multiplication in first gear by redesigning the transmission.

The effects of my changeover were quite marked; Much quieter operation in high gear at 40 mph and above, and better part throttle acceleration through the gears. High gear acceleration at low speeds is somewhat less, but even with the heavy convertible sedan body the car does not give an impression of sluggishness.

This change is easily (!) done on either a '37 or '38 Special by transplanting the ring and pinion set, along with the differential case from a '37 or '38 Century (if the two cars are not of the same year, differential side gears and thrust washers, differential bearings, and axle shafts must also be changed, according to the '38 BUICK SHOP MANUAL).

Unfortunately neither the axle housing nor the drive shaft from the Century will fit the Special, so the pinion must be removed from one drive shaft and pressed into another, an extremely difficult job without a specialized tool. The differential case must be changed because its ring gear mounting plane is located a slight distance further away from the pinion axis (in the 3.9 and lower numerical ratios), to allow for the somewhat larger pinion head diameter. Additionally, the 22 tooth speedometer driven gear in the Special, located in the transmission, should be replaced with the 19 tooth gear from the Century. The shafts these gears fit on are (at least in '37) of different lengths, but they may be changed by pressing in a vise.

In summary, this is a way in which you can keep your '37-'38 Buick Special original and have some of the benefits of an overdrive, too.

HANK BATES #326



Dear Dave,

Below and on the following page is a Technical Article on the modification I did on my '37 Century 2-Dr about three years ago. I've driven the Buick every where since then with no trouble at all. At 55 M.P.H. I get 15 M.P.G. on regular gas and that's not too bad for a 3800 pound Buick with a 320 C.I. Straight Eight.

WILLIAM BOB PIPKIN #76

SEE DRAWINGS ON FOLLOWING PAGE.....

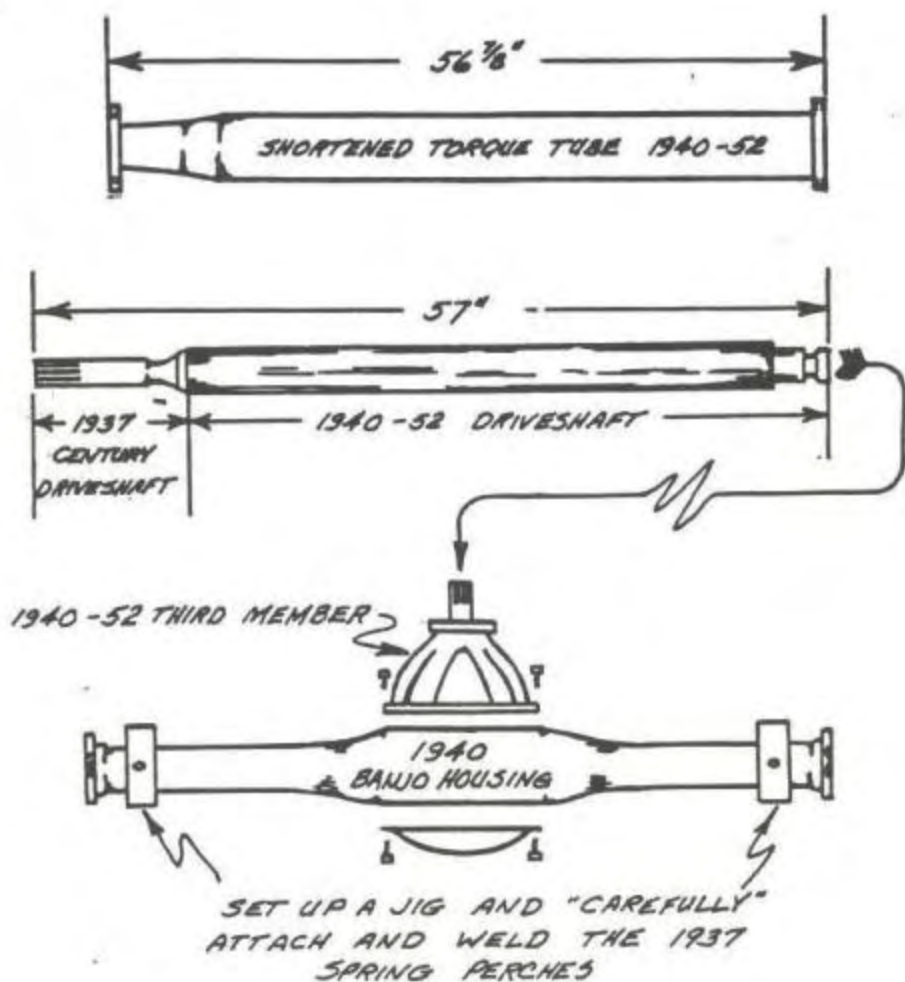
Upgrading the 1937 Century rear end to obtain larger axles, larger pinion bearings and carrier bearings; also will result in a better gear ratio selection. Use 1940 series 40, 50, 60 or 70 rear end assembly; torque tube, drive shaft, third member, axles and banjo assembly.

1. Cut off radius arm tabs from 1940 torque tube.
2. Shorten torque tube to exactly 56 7/8" over all length. Have a drive shaft shop do this in a lathe and reweld it straight.
3. Remove the radius rod bracket from the 1937 torque tube and relocate on the shortened 1940 torque tube. .
4. Cut off the spring perches from the 1937 banjo housing. Be careful here, leave a slight amount of metal around the spring perch so it can be welded to the 1940 banjo housing.
5. Cut all the extra tabs and brackets from the 1940 banjo housing. Set up a jig to locate the 1937 spring perches on the 1940 banjo housing.
6. Use the splined front of the 1937 Century drive shaft. Shorten the 40 drive shaft and weld the "stub" front end of the 37 Century drive shaft to the 1940 drive shaft. Make these cuts and welds accurate!
7. Press the "new" 37-40 mated drive shaft onto the pinion of a 1940-52 third member assembly. A ratio of 3.60 or 3.90 is ideal, 1940 Centuries and Roadmasters had either a 3.60 or 3.90 ratio.
8. Bolt on the new shortend 1940 torque tube and the 1937 radius rods.
9. Reuse your 1937 backing plates and brakes if wanted. If the rear end assembly from the 1940 Buick you are using is from a Century or Roadmaster, now is the time to go to 2 1/4" rear brakes. If you do this, just leave the backing plates and brake assemblies intact on the 1940 banjo housing.
10. Install the 1940 axle shafts. 1938 to 1940 axle shafts from the series 60 and 40 cars will work here; also 1940 series 70.
11. Bolt the entire completed unit under your 1937 Century and enjoy your "upgraded" Buick.

This same basic operation can be done on the 1937 Specials and the 1938 series 40 and 60 cars. The dimensions on the torque tube and drive shaft would be different of course.



# 1937 CENTURY DRIVELINE MODIFICATION



It is my impression that '37 and '38 60-series rear end parts have become extremely scarce. This may place a practical limitation on the whole business until (or unless) some parts cars appear, and, in view of the continuing popularity of the Century, such appearance cannot be counted upon. According to Bob Pipkin, '39 parts will not work, and '40 and later require the kind of substantial modification he discusses. For such help as it may be, here are the 1937 and 1938 part numbers for 60-series cars.

	Gear Set	Ring	Pinion	Case
1937 -	T394155	1296862	T297308	1297450
1938 -	1394388	1303405	1303406	1302174
(Gear set is the ring and pinion together.)				

You will note that '37 and '38 cannot be interchanged.



## □ Observations □

I will conclude with a few personal observations. They are just that: my own thoughts, not meant to be authoritative about anything. In 1972, I bought a new Volvo station wagon, and since I did not expect to have it still 13 years and 120,000 miles later, or to do a great deal of high-speed driving in it, and since it seemed expensive enough (\$4,250!), I did not spring for the \$150 overdrive. This car has a 4.3 rear end, direct drive in high gear, and is now and always was noisy and bouncy. However, as things turned out, I drove it many a mile at 65 mph (3800+ rpm) and thought nothing about doing that. Now, used to newer cars engineered for economy and silence, when I get the old hulk out it seems almost frightening to top 50 mph. Although there are obvious differences between pre-war Buicks and '72 Volvos, I tell you all this to illustrate a point. I think a great deal of the trouble some people have with 40-series Buicks is psychological. We simply are not accustomed to cars geared like that. To me, the '37 Buick is like the Volvo, and once I've gone a mile or so at 55 and found it has not blown up, I settle into the different character. If I were intent upon a 40-series car to drive at sustained 55-65 mph speeds, I would first rebuild the engine completely using later-style bearings (no babbitt-metal) and an add-on oil filter, have all reciprocating parts balanced and magnafluxed, and then break it in carefully with quality lubrication. After all that, if I absolutely could not stand it, I would try the rear end treatment. But in the end (no pun intended!) all that would gain for me would be 300 to 400 less rpm at 55-60 mph.

It is too bad that there are no overdrives or two-speed axles for Buicks. But, I guess we can't have everything.

## □ Can You Help? □

In view of the scarcity of 60-series rear end parts, it has been suggested to me that we explore the possibility of having some custom-made. Knowing little about machine work, I can only guess this would be a difficult and very expensive project, perhaps requiring not only a high level of skill and some fancy machinery, but also enough "up-front" financing to enable the provider thereof to buy a whole 60-series car in the first place. However, let me begin consideration of the subject with these questions:

- (1) Does anyone have '37 or '38 60-series rear end parts that might be loaned for use as patterns? Or complete working drawings?
- (2) Assuming such patterns or drawings could be made available, does anyone have the capability to make such parts, or know where that could be done? Does anyone have a decent idea how much such a project would cost?
- (3) Does anyone have any further information on parts, from Buicks or other makes, that can be modified or adapted for use in '37 or '38 40-series rear axles?

Maybe next month we will talk about front ends. It ought to be easier and less controversial.



# MAIL



THE

## VETERAN MOTOR CAR CLUB OF AMERICA

OFFICE OF MEMBERSHIP VICE PRESIDENT

ALBERT PAVLIK, JR.

1803 NORTON PLACE

STEUBENVILLE, OHIO 43952

Sept. 8, 1985

1937-1938 Buick Club  
842 Mission Hills Lane  
Worthington, Ohio 43085

Attention: William E. Olson

Dear Bill,

Sorry you didn't get to our Car Show on Sunday August 11 at the Fort Steuben Mall. The weather was great and we had 161 cars. Maybe next year.

I am enclosing my check renewing my dues for the next year (9/1/85 - 8/31/86). Keep up the great work. I look forward to receiving my copy of The Torque Tube. Lots of interesting reading.

The reason that I am writing on official VMCCA stationery is that I want to announce the fact that the 1986 Chrome Glidden Tour will be held in Steubenville, Ohio from August 10 - 15, 1986. Steubenville is approximately 40 miles due west of Pittsburgh, Pa.

The tour will be of the hub type and each day we will tour in a different direction and returning to Steubenville each night. There is a lot of nice country around here and this is the first national tour to be held in this area.

The University of Steubenville will be the headquarters of the tour. Cars from 1935 to 1961 are eligible (so bring your 1937-38 Buicks). However you must be a member of the Veteran Motor Car Club of America to participate. If interested, write me for more information.

I hope to see you at the BCA Nationals in Indianapolis next year. I wanted also to attend the Great Lakes Regional but we have a busy schedule and I don't get to do all the things that I want to. You know how that goes.

Anyhow, keep those Torque Tubes coming.

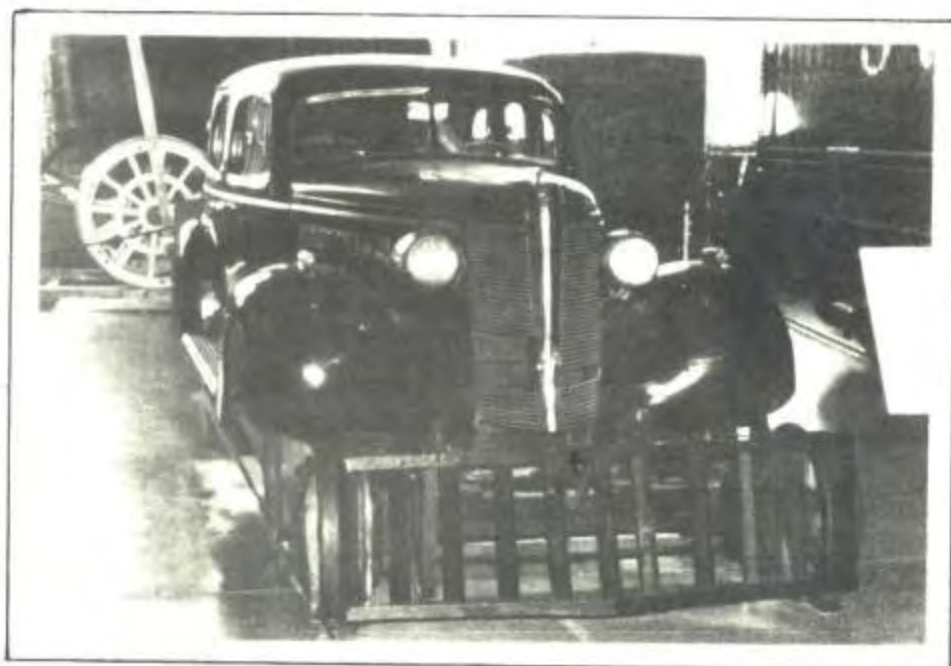
Yours truly,

Albert Pavlik Jr. #062  
Membership Vice President  
Veteran Motor Car Club of America

Thanks,  
Al!



from our Roving Reporters ~



## RailRoadmaster on the "Ma & Pa"

One of our new members, Charles Jekofsky (#524) of Washington, D.C. offered to look things up for us in the vast bowels of the Federal Government, where he works -- if I remember it correctly -- in the U.S. Government Printing Office. Having no idea whether anything might be discovered there, I sent him instead to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum in Baltimore. Oh migawd, you are now saying, the Editor has gone mad with this railroad stuff and must be deposed. Not so! This relates to cars, and in fact to a 1937 Buick Roadmaster. Through the efforts of another spy, Paul Culp (#508) who lives up north of Baltimore in beautiful Bucks County, PA, I had learned that in the B&O Museum is a 1937 Buick converted long ago to use as a rail inspection car. Charles has provided us with some photos and a few comments.

The easiest and most informative course seems simply to quote the sign in the museum, Charles having conveniently photographed said sign for me:

"RAILMOBILE"  
(Built 1937-Converted 1942)

Specially-converted automobiles took to the rails shortly after World War I, providing local superintendents with convenient transportation for inspection trips through their territory. This relatively-luxurious car was the fourth to see service on the Maryland & Pennsylvania Railroad, and spent thirty years working on that important regional carrier.

(CONTINUED)

The 1937 Buick began life as a limousine for the Harkins Funeral Home in Delta, Pennsylvania and was sold to the "Ma & Pa" in 1942. Railroad shopmen outfitted her with regular railroad wheels, a compressor, air brakes and a sander -- and added a full-wheeled "truck" to her front end. The pin-swivel truck gave the vehicle great safety and stability...and a highly unusual appearance!

She replaced a 1926 Rickenbacker as the Ma & Pa's principal rail-mobile, and immediately began her most important assignment: a test of the efficiency of newfangled radio communications between trains and railroad offices. Shortly thereafter, the Ma & Pa became one of the first railroads in the country to adopt in-cab radios.

For the next three decades, the converted Buick chugged faithfully along the rails, carrying track inspectors, officials and visiting dignitaries...and attracting hordes of camera-toting rail buffs. Traded in for an up-to-date "Roadmaster" in 1972, she was donated to the B&O Museum later that year.

Charles wondered why the railroad left the steering wheel in the car, and we suppose that, unless maybe it was just too much trouble to remove it, the "engineer" felt more comfortable with something to hang on to! The air brake lever and sander control (to dump a little fine sand on the rails to improve adhesion) were placed on the steering column. Charles surmised that the fender wells were converted into tool compartments, but I expect that's where they kept the sand. The front "truck" with its homemade "pilot" ("cow catcher" to the uninitiated) appears to pivot under the front frame cross-member. You will note they kept the rear hubcaps.

Sadly, the car shows the ravages of time. I think it would be a terrific project for some of our members in the vicinity of Baltimore to volunteer to help the Museum with a cosmetic fixing-up. Do I have a volunteer to captain such an effort?

"Railmobiles" were not at all unusual in the 1920-50 era, and a few became famous. Perhaps the most well-known was the Rio Grande Southern's "Galloping Goose." Now only a memory, the RGS was built in the boom days of mining in southwestern Colorado, and clung to life after the gold was gone with an incredible variety of ancient equipment. I believe there were several "Geese" with truck and bus bodies. More solvent railroads used better stuff, and members from the early days of this Club may remember an article by Bob Ward (#114) on a McLaughlin-Buick 1937 limousine purchased new by the Canadian Pacific and run in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick until the 1960's. The Maryland & Pennsylvania was more like the RGS than the CPR, and gave railroad buffs many a colorful scene. Thankfully, at least one of these interesting vehicles has been preserved.

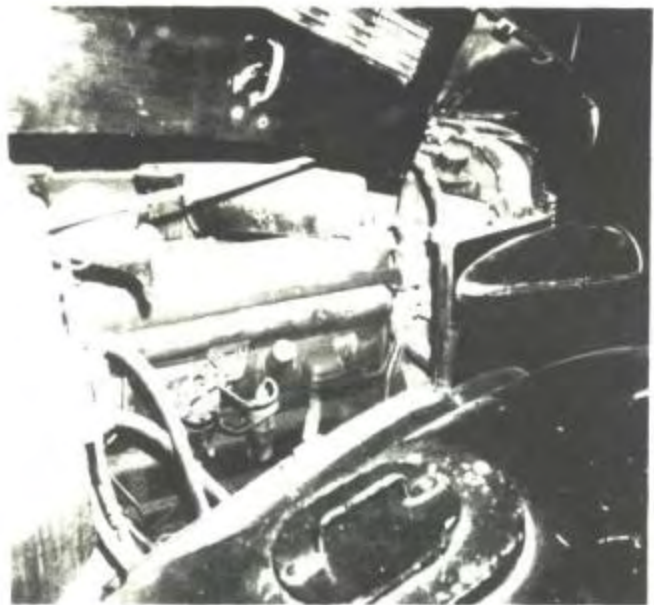


MA & PA'S 1937 BUICK RAILMOBILE  
Mod. No. 81, Front view

Thanks also to David Bylsma (117) of Hanover, MD who sent me photos of the same car, too late to include in this feature.



## 1937 Roadmaster Railcar



View at left shows air brake lever on steering column. At right, improvised cover over "sand well" with engine, grimy but apparently complete. Buick built 'em better!



Just picture the Old Man, with cigar and derby, sitting in the back with the Superintendent of Motive Power, the Road Foreman driving and the Chief Clerk taking notes as she rolls through the Pennsylvania country side on a brisk autumn morning. "Ya can't run a railroad behind a desk" the Old Man always said. Highball!



# PARTS FOR SALE



Fenders: 1937-38 Buick Model 40 left and right front, excellent used, no rust out, both with inner fenders and fender brace, one with parking light base. \$175.00 each. FOB Stan Brown's, Inc., Box 381, Hampton, NH 03842 603-926-2337 days, 603-926-5136 evenings.

**\*\* SEE ALSO JOHN HOPLEY'S RUNNINGBOARDS & RUBBER, PAGE 15 \*\***

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37	Trunk lid	( Sandblasted )	( Model 41 )	50.00	
37	Front doors	( Sandblasted )	( Model 41 )	50.00	set
37	Floor board trans. cover		( Special )	5.00	
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37	Jump seats		( Limited )	50.00	set
38	Glove box door			5.00	
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38	Emergence brake handel			5.00	
38	Rear fender oblong gravel gaurd			5.00	
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38	Rechromed bumper gaurd			25.00	
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38	Right side tail light		( No Lens )	5.00	
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38	Dome light with lens			10.00	set
38	Dome light lens only			5.00	
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38	Headlights complete, except lenses			85.00	set
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38	Rear fenders	( Limited )	&( Roadmaster )	45.00	each
38	Side panels	( No louvers )	( Limited )	20.00	set
38	Front & rear drums	( 2 is a set )	( Limited )	40.00	set
38	Rear foot rest		( Limited )	20.00	
38	Jump seats		( Limited )	50.00	set

All prices plus shipping charges

Phone number (301)-551-7236

David A. Bylsma #117  
7747 Siden Drive  
Hanover, Maryland 21076





# PARTS WANTED



## WANTED

NOS ring and pinion gear and carrier assembly from Century with 3.9 ratio to replace the 4.4 ratio presently in my 1938 Buick Special.

RAY MONTGOMERY (#081)  
117 Leonie Street  
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Phone: Day 318/981-4080  
Night 318/984-4679

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OR VOL. II WRITE TO EDITOR,  
WITH SASE, PLEASE. THANKS.)



## DAVE LEWIS RESTORATION



Detailed Restoration And Parts For  
All 1937 And 1938 Buick Automobiles

3825 South Second Street, Springfield, Illinois 62703  
217-529-5200



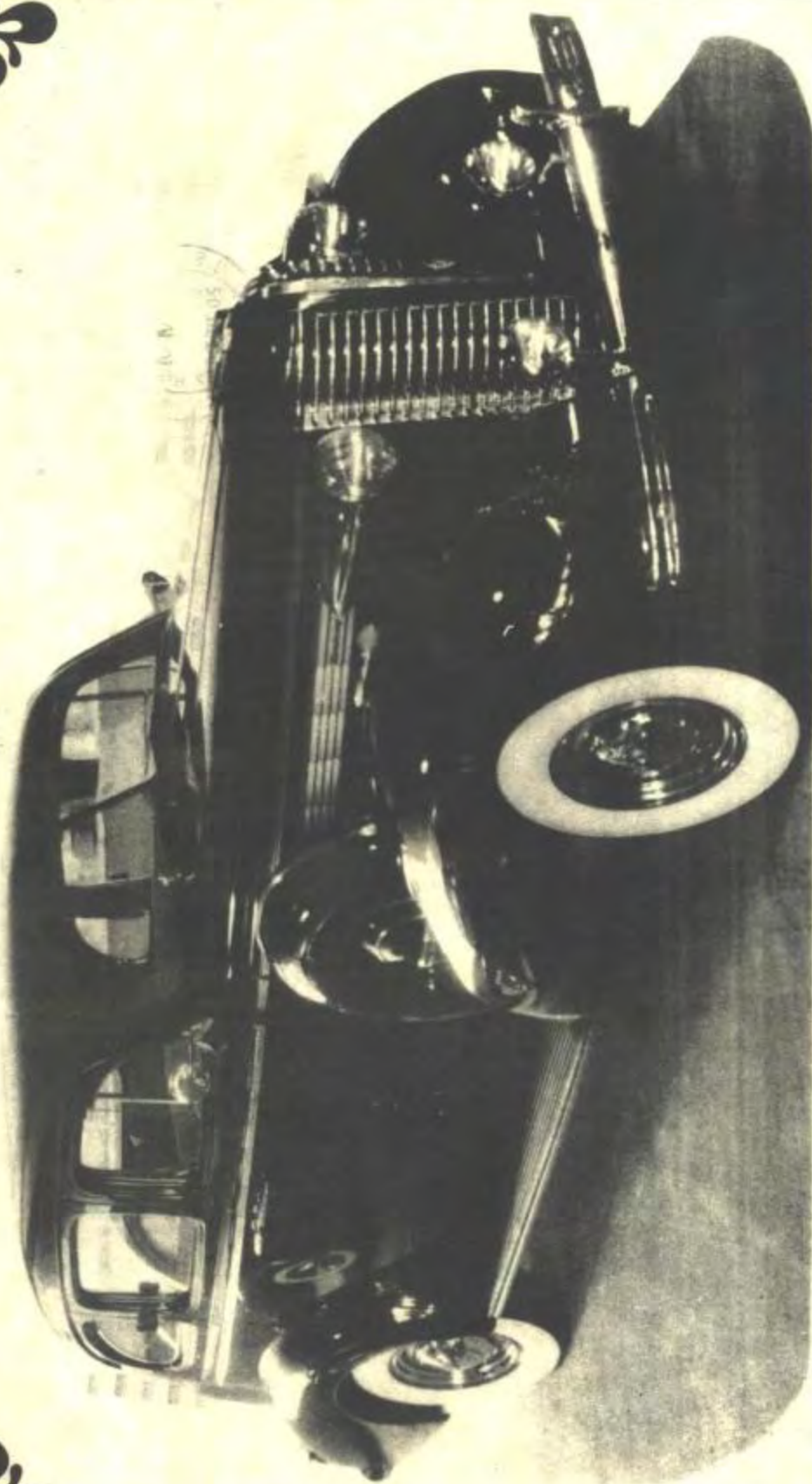
# TECHNICAL TIPS:

3	12	Air Cleaner Elements
1	21	1938 Battery Lock
1	23	Briggs & Stratton Corp. Lock Service Instructions
1	18	1938 Carburetor Chocke Flies Sticking Prevention
2	19	Clutches
3	11	1938 Clutch Disk
8	14	Contact Cement in Running Board Restoration
9	26-27	Convertible Tops
8	13-17	Cooling systems Modernization
3	12	Cowl Vent Drain Tube
9	13	Crankcase Protection in Dusty Environments
1	16	1937 80 & 90 Dash
3	13	Dash Substitution
1	17	1937 Defroster Installation
3	11	1938 Dealer Inspection Form Offer
2	12-15	Delco-Remy Control Units - Vibrating Voltage Regulator
4	22-23	Delco-Remy Statre Controls - Solenoid Switch-Types
8	25	Delco Choke Calibration
7	6-7	1938 Factory Accessories & Options
1	14	Fuel Pumps & Filters
3	10	Fuel Tank Repair
2	20	Gear Shift Shaft Paint Color
1	19-20	1936-38 Generator Pulley & Chart
4	16-17	Hand Brake Cable Restoration
9	22	1937 Heaters
6	17	Hood Lace Installation
1	15	Hood Prop
8	23	Hub Cap Letter Trim
3	19-20	1937 Instrument Panel Finishing
4	15	1938 Instrument Pane;
1	16	Kick Panel Restoration
6	14	Kee-Action Shock Absorbers
9	11-12	Oil & Filters
1	14	Paint
5	12	Paint
4	14	Parts Interchange
1	22	1938 Production Changes
4	29	1938 Radiator Ornament Attaching
4	18-21	1937 Rear Axel
1	15	1938 rear Shocks
3	9	1937 Rear Springs
6	4	Robe Rail Restoration
2	20-21	Rocker Panel Restoration
1	17	1938 Shock Absorber Stone Sheild
7	11	Silicone Brake Fluid
1	22	Spark Plug Terminals
9	28	1938 Speedometer Gears
3	16	Spotlights
4	18	1937 Steering gears
5	13-25	Stromberg Carburetors AA-1
6	19	Stromberg Carburetors AA-2
7	13-19	Stromberg "AAV" Carburetors
2	11	Torque Wrench Readings
5	10	1937 Tool Kit
2	16-17	Transmissions (2nd Type)
6	10-13	Transmissions
3	14	1937-41 Trunck Detailing
7	9	1937 Trunck Handles
1	15	Throttle Cables
3	15	Turn Signal
2	18	Universal Joints
8	18-22	Water Pumps
8	23	Wheel Sizes

-Submitted by:

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1938 model 61 ~ Marv Rhynard